

Message Text

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R 171312Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3684

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENGLAND

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3126

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR MOPS MILI ET

SUBJECT: REPORTING FROM ETHIOPIA: THE MILITARY SITUATION

REFS: (A) ADDIS 2398; (B) ADDIS 1797; (C) STATE 029370

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. THIS IS THE THIRD MILITARY SITUATION REPORT DEALING WITH ETHIOPIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN ERITREA SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REF C. COMMAND AND CONTROL CONTINUES TO IMPROVE. SOME GROUND UNITS ARE ADMITTING DIFFICULTY IN CONDUCTING OPERATIONS IN ERITREA BECAUSE OF LACK OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE; AT LEAST ONE BECAUSE OF LARGE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN PAST OPERATIONS. NO RELIABLE ESTIMATES OF PAST CASUALTIES ARE YET AVAILABLE, BUT THEY APPEAR TO BE RELATIVELY HIGH. RECRUITING, RECALL OF DISCHARGED PERSONNEL AND INVOLUNTARY EXTENSIONS ARE APPARENTLY BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THE ARMY. AIR OPERATIONS APPEAR SOMEWHAT REDUCED FROM PREVIOUS REPORT BUT REGULAR F5 MISSIONS CONTINUE. AIRLIFT SHUTTLES ARE NOW IN OPERATION TO INCLUDE MASSAWA-ASMARA AND ADDIS-DIRE DAWA-

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ASMARA AND AVERAGE THREE OR FOUR FLIGHTS WEEKLY. EXCEPT FOR

DISCONTINUANCE OF PC OPERATIONS FROM ASSAB, NAVY ACTIVITY REMAINS AT ABOUT THE LEVELS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

1. ARMY DISPOSITIONS - THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN DISPOSITIONS SINCE LAST REPORT (FEBRUARY 21, 1975). HOWEVER, THE 26TH INF. BN. IN ASSAB HAS BEEN PLACED UNDER COMMAND OF THE 1ST DIVISION IN ADDIS AND THE DIVISION BOUNDARIES ADJUSTED TO GIVE 1ST DIVISION RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSAB AND THE ASSAB-DESSIE-ADDIS HIGHWAY. FIRST DIVISION IS CONSIDERING MOVEMENT OF THE 19TH INF. BN. AND PANHARD ARMORED CARS OF THE 1ST DIVISION RECON. CO. (BOTH FROM ADDIS) TO THE ASSAB AREA TO PROVIDE INCREASED SECURITY FOR THE ASSAB-DESSIE HIGHWAY.

2. COMMAND AND CONTROL

A. NATIONAL-RADIO LINKS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FROM ADDIS TO ASMARA AND HARRAR. THIS REPRESENTS FIRST SUBSTANTIAL RESULTS OF A LONG-SOUGHT GOAL OF USMAAG FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM.

B. ARMY-FIRST DIVISION ADMITS THAT ITS BATTALIONS IN ERITREA UNDER OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF 2ND DIVISION ARE EXPERIENCING CONTROL DIFFICULTY IN CONDUCTING COUNTERGUERRILLA OPERATIONS BECAUSE OF LACK OF TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE IN THIS AREA.

C. AIR FORCE-THE ADDIS ABABA JOINT OPERATION CENTER HAS ESTABLISHED A LIMITED PHONE PATCH CAPABILITY WITHIN THE CITY. THIS ALLOWS KEY PERSONNEL TO BE CONTACTED AT THEIR RESIDENCE AND, THROUGH A JOC PHONE-RADIO PATCH, TALK DIRECTLY TO INDIVIDUALS AT ASMARA JOC. WORK IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY TO INSTALL A RADIO-PHONE PATCH CAPABILITY INTO THE HARRAR JOC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK. ON MARCH 6 SENIOR EAF OFFICIALS EXPRESSED DESIRE TO REVIEW AID/GROUND CONTROL SYSTEM DURING WEEK OF MARCH 10-14 WITH USMAAG.

D. NAVY- NO KNOWN CHANGES IN SITUATION.

3. ARMY ACTIVITY IN ERITREA

A. THE 12TH INF. BN. IN THE KEREN AREA IS REPORTED TO HAVE SUFFERED A LARGE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES. ACTUAL NUMBER IS UNKNOWN BUT MAGNITUDE HAS SEVERELY REDUCED COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS.

B. PERSONNEL REPLACEMENT IS A PROBLEM. INDICATIONS ARE THAT FORMERLY DISCHARGED ENLISTED MEN WILL BE RECALLED TO ACTIVE DUTY
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AS THE PRIME SOURCE OF REPLACEMENTS FOR IMMEDIATE NEEDS. THERE ARE NO CURRENT PLANS FOR RECALL OF DISCHARGED OFFICERS. RECRUITING IS APPARENTLY INCREASING AND INVOLUNTARY EXTENSIONS APPEAR TO BE IN EFFECT IN SOME CASES.

4. AIR FORCE ACTIVITIES IN ERITREA

A. DAILY DEPLOYMENT OF F5A'S TO ASMARA HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED. ON FEBRUARY 23, 1975, SIX F5A'S WERE DEPLOYED

TO ASMARA. A TOTAL OF 25 HOURS WAS FLOWN THAT DAY. NORMALLY ONE HOUR PLUS OR MINUS TEN MINUTES IS REQUIRED TO FLY BETWEEN ASMARA-HAME. TWO F5A'S REMAINED AT ASMARA AND THE REMAINING FOUR MADE ROUND TRIP TO HAME SAME DAY. ESTIMATED TEN HOURS WERE USED IN FERRY FLIGHTS. THIS WOULD LEAVE 15 HOURS OR A MINIMUM ESTIMATE OF TEN COMBAT SORTIES WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN FLOWN IN SUPPORT OF ARMY UNITS ON 23RD. THIS IS COMPUTED USING ONE HOUR, THIRTY MINUTES FOR NORMAL COMBAT SORTIES. (THIS IS HIGH SIDE. PILOTS HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT FLYING MISSION OF FIFTY MINUTES TO ONE HOUR, FIVE MINUTES.)

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B. ON THE 24TH, TWO F5A'S THAT REMAINED AT ASMARA FLEW A TOTAL OF SEVEN HOURS, INCLUDING TIME FLOWN RETURNING TO HAME AB. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE FOR FOUR SORTIES TO HAVE BEEN FLOWN IN SUPPORT OF ARMY UNITS PRIOR TO AIRCRAFT RETURNING FROM ASMARA.

C. NO ACTIVITY WAS REPORTED ON THE 25TH OF FEBRUARY.

D. ON THE 26TH, THREE F5A'S DEPLOYED TO ASMARA. BASED UPON TIME REPORTED AND CRITERIA EXPLAINED ABOVE, COMBAT SORTIES COULD HAVE BEEN FLOWN WHILE AT ASMARA. ALL THREE AIRCRAFT REMAINED AT ASMARA ON NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 26.

E. TWO AIRCRAFT WERE IN-COMMISSION AND FLEW 11 HOURS, 35 MINUTES ON THE 27TH. ESTIMATED EIGHT SORTIES WERE FLOWN WITH SIX IN SUPPORT OF THE ARMY UNITS AND TWO ADDITIONAL FLOWN ON ASMARA TO HAME RETURN. THE THIRD F5A REMAINED AT ASMARA UNTIL THE 2ND OF MARCH. AT THAT TIME REPAIRS WERE COMPLETE, F/C/F FLOWN, AND AIRCRAFT RETURNED TO HAME AB. NO OTHER MISSIONS
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WERE FLOWN THAT DAY, NOR WERE ANY OTHER ACTIVITIES OBSERVED THROUGH MARCH 7, 1975.

F. THE ACTIVITY OF CANBERRA BOMBER SQUADRON HAS BEEN REDUCED. TWO AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN OBSERVED ON THE RAMP OR FLYING DURING THIS PERIOD. (THE OTHER TWO REMAIN INSIDE THE HANGARS.) IT WAS NOTED THAT CREW MEMBERS ARE NOW FLYING WITH OVERWATER SURVIVAL GEAR ON THEIR PERSON. THE ENDURANCE OF THIS AIRCRAFT MAKES IT IDEALLY SUITED FOR RECONNAISSANCE STRIKE MISSIONS OVER RED SEA.

G. ACTIVITIES OF F86/T28D AIR UNKNOWN.

H. NO UNDERCURRENT OF UNREST HAS BEEN NOTED AMONG PERSONNEL OF EAF AT HAME AB. THE MOOD HAS BEEN SUBDUED BUT BUSINESSLIKE.

5. NAVY ACTIVITY IN ERITREA

A. TEMPO OF PATROL ACTIVITY IS CONTINUING AT ABOUT THE SAME LEVEL AS LAST REPORTED, EXCEPT NO PC'S ARE OPERATING OUT OF ASSAB. ANOTHER BG WENT AGROUND DURING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 24.

B. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT ALL TRAINING AT THE NAVAL TRAINING CENTER, DONGOLLO, HAS STOPPED.

C. IN MASSAWA EN OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS AND CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED TO TAKE WEAPONS AND AMMO TO THEIR PERSONAL RESIDENCES AT NIGHT. HOWEVER, IT IS BELIEVED THAT ONLY NON-ERITREAN PERSONNEL ARE SO AUTHORIZED.

6. ARMY LOGISTICS SUPPORT-INFORMATION OF SPECIFIC AMMUNITION EXPENDITURE RATES REMAINS UNAVAILABLE. (IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE LOGISTICS OFFICER, HE STATED THAT EXPENDITURE REPORTS ARE UNRELIABLE.) HOWEVER, 1ST AND 4TH DIVISION UNITS IN THE ADDIS AREA HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO TURN IN ALL COMPANY AND BATTALION STORES OF AMMUNITION FOR SHIPMENT NORTH. .30 CALIBER AMMUNITION IS CONSIDERED ESPECIALLY CRITICAL BY ARMY.

7. AIR FORCE LOGISTICS SUPPORT

A. AIRLIFT SUPPORT HAS BEEN EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN C119 AND C47 AIRCRAFT. THE C119'S HAVE BEEN AVERAGING THREE TO FOUR

LOGISTIC RUNS TO ASMARA VIA DIRE DAWA WEEKLY. THE C47'S HAVE STARTED FLYING LOCAL MISSIONS AT HAME IN ADDITION TO THEIR CONTINUED BASING OF ONE AIRCRAFT AT MASSAWA FOR ASMARA SHUTTLE. IN-COMMISSION STATUS OF C119'S AND C47'S HAS BEEN FOUR TO SIX
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EACH, DAILY. THIS EQUATES TO A 50-75 PERCENT AVAILABILITY OF C119'S AND 66-75 PERCENT AVAILABILITY OF C47'S.

B. ON MARCH 6, SIX MISSIONS WERE SCHEDULED FOR ASMARA (THREE C119'S AND THREE C47'S). ALL WERE CANCELLED BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTY OVER REACTION TO ANNOUNCED LAND REFORM.

C. SUFFICIENT CREWS HAVE NOW BEEN TRAINED TO MAN MORE THAN TWO C119'S AT ONE TIME WITHOUT SUBTRACTION FROM C47 MISSIONS. THIS CAPABILITY DID NOT EXIST AT START OF INCREASED ACTIVITY IN ERITREA.

8. NAVY LOGISTICS SUPPORT-THE EN IN MASSAWA IS RECEIVING TWO TO THREE AIRLIFT SORTIES OF FOOD PER WEEK AND HAS BEEN BUYING LOCAL FISH IN LARGE QUANTITIES. HOWEVER, IT STILL APPEARS TO HAVE A FOOD PROBLEM. THE USMAAG ADVISER ESTIMATES THAT IN THE NEAR FUTURE THERE WILL BE A SHORTAGE OF STEEL PLATING AND UNDERWATER HULL PAINT DUE TO THE TEMPO OF OPERATION AND RECENT GROUNDINGS.

9. WE DOUBT WHETHER OPERATIONS IN ERITREA FOR THE PRESENT ARE LIKELY TO HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON THE MILITARY PREPAREDNESS OF THE ARMED FORCES THROUGHOUT ETHIOPIA. UNLESS OTHERWISE ADVISED, OR UNLESS A DRASTIC CHANGE OCCURS, WE THEREFORE INTEND TO DISCONTINUE THIS SERIES OF REPORTS.
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